

## THE TIMES EDITOR.

THE LATE MR. THOMAS CHENERY AS SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST.

FROM THE REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.

The Times does itself the honor of putting its leader page in mourning for its late Editor, Mr. Thomas Chenery, who died yesterday morning from the effects of an operation for abscess in the stomach. He has been Editor of the Times since the end of 1877, when he succeeded Mr. Delane. An account of his life and an estimate of his character and services occupy two columns of the journal he edited, and for once it drops the veil of mystery with which it delights, as a rule, to screen its affairs, or make believe screen them, from the public. Neither Mr. Delane's retirement nor Mr. Chenery's accession was mentioned at the time.

The facts of Mr. Chenery's life may be stated in a few sentences. He was born in Barbados in 1820, went to school at Eton, then to Caius College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar. He began his journalistic life soon after the time of his graduation at Cambridge, "in the stormy diplomatic period which preceded the Crimean war." It was there that he seems first to have acquired a taste for those Oriental languages in which he afterward became a proficient. "On more than one occasion," says his biographer, "Mr. Chenery went up to the Crimea to relieve Dr. W. H. Russell, who, as he himself says, was our special correspondent at the seat of war." The sentence is a remarkable one. It is unquestionably well known that Dr. W. H. Russell was the special correspondent of the Times in the Crimea, but I am by no means sure that the fact was ever announced in the journal to which he sent his letters. After the war Mr. Chenery returned to England, and from that time on became permanently connected with the journal "as a regular contributor of leading articles, reviews and other original papers." He pursued his Oriental and other linguistic studies at the same time. Modern Greek and Turkish, Arabic, Hebrew, he wrote and spoke with fluency. His scientific knowledge of these languages was, it is agreed, of a high order. If he had a specialty it seems to have been Arabic. The publication in 1867 of "The Assemblies of Al-Harith," gave him a wide reputation in the learned world, and a Professorship in 1868, of Arabic at Oxford.

So competent was he as a judge as a student of Oriental literature by predilection, and M. Renan, incoherently the most brilliant Semitic scholar of France, spoke to a common friend in terms of enthusiastic admiration of Mr. Chenery's philological attainments. "There is a remark in Dr. Johnson's 'Life of Sir Thomas Browne,' to the effect that the reciprocal civility of authors is one of the most risible scenes in the face of life. No doubt, however, Mr. Chenery deserved his fame as an Orientalist.

What concerns us more is his fame as a journalist. Two of his contemporaries in London Journalism publish brief but respectful tributes to his memory. What *The Times* itself says is expressed in terms to which it is difficult to give one's full assent, in which none the less do honor, as I began saying, to a journal that has not only shown its own staff solicitude to enhance the reputation of its own staff, but to have done justice to them. With this amiable sentiment toward Mr. Chenery is mingled some feeling of the need in which *The Times* itself stands of apology. Whoever holds the pen for Mr. Walter puts in a kind of protest against the general verdict upon the recent conduct of the paper, and an attempted vindication of the appointment of Mr. Chenery. The ideal editor is first depicted. After an enumeration of the great events since 1877, the writer says:

An Editor of *The Times* must move and work not merely in great affairs, *Hannibal* and *scutellum* pueri; whatever concerns mankind for the moment, from a war to a whim, from a passing fancy or transient fashion to the great secular movements of humanity, from a great crime to a great catastrophe, the tragedy of life and the achievements of literature, the vicissitudes of circumstance and the inexorable march of death—these, and much more than these, are the threads in the web of which an editor's life is woven, and they belong as much to his personal life as they do to the general history of his time.

Mr. Chenery is then described as a man of wide knowledge, sound judgment and great capacity; an accomplished publicist, an experienced man of affairs. As the dominant interest in public life in this since he became Editor has centered largely in the East, Mr. Walter hopes to be acknowledged that his selection for the post was a happy one. Mr. Chenery was amply justified both by his personal fitness for the position and by his special and peculiar aptitude for dealing with Oriental affairs. "And we are to draw by the way the flattering inference that Mr. Walter so far foresaw the course of events as to nominate an Arabic scholar to deal with the coming complexities of the Eastern question in one of its acutest forms. Well, it may be that we have all been dreaming troubled dreams, and that the general conviction of the decadence of *The Times* has had no real basis; that it never lent its influence to the Jingo movement, nor gave any support to Lord Beaconsfield's hollow schemes of Oriental aggrandizement, but pursued during all these years a wise, prudent, well-balanced and far-sighted policy of its own. But that is not, I am sorry to say, the general opinion.

But I don't think it was wholly or mainly Mr. Chenery's fault if the journal ever, which he exercised nominal control, wavered and went wrong on so many recent questions, both English and European. It has been the belief among journalists that Mr. Chenery was made Editor in name to the end that Mr. Walter, who is the chief proprietor of the paper, might be Editor in fact, or whenever the whim seized him. Mr. Walter does not pass for a man of wide knowledge and sound judgment in public affairs, but he is none the less (perhaps all the more) eager to meddle with high matters. Mr. Delane was an editor of too much independence of spirit and too sure of himself to tolerate interference. Upon his retirement it seems to have been thought desirable to select a successor who would provide a more pliable Mr. Chenery was pitched upon. His long experience in some departments of journalism gave an air of pliancy to the choice. Mr. Chenery was an excellent writer on certain subjects. He had been, as we have seen, correspondent at Constantinople. But he was essentially a literary man. I do not know in what sense it can be said, as is said in the passage I have quoted, that he was an experienced man of affairs. Save in the Constantinople episode, there is nothing to show that he had ever come in contact with men of affairs. He knew, I think, very little of journalism on what may be called its practical side. He had never been in the collection of the paper, nor concerned in the management of news, nor versed in any branch of the administration of a great paper. He had no executive experience whatever. And he was fifty-nine years old when the editorship of *The Times* was thrust upon him.

Nor was Mr. Chenery what is called a man of the world. I hope I may avoid anything that looks like a contradiction of what is stated in *The Times*, except in matters of opinion. I do not mean it is a contradiction in any other sense, but the truth is that when Mr. Chenery was put into Mr. Delane's chair the feeling was that Mr. Walter had gone to the antipodes for a successor to that great Editor. Mr. Delane, it may be said without exaggeration, knew everything an Editor ought to know. He was bred to the profession. He had lived in the office. He had been forty years chief of the chief journal of Europe. He knew everybody. Mr. Chenery knew nobody. Speaking of the political world in which he was henceforward to be a power, I mean to be understood literally. His acquaintance lay among scholars. He was a recluse; unknown in London outside of the Athenaeum Club, and known in the Athenaeum Club mainly to a particular set. But among this set, and among Mr. Chenery's friends, friends, was Mr. Haywood. Mr. Haywood gave all the advantages of his immense personal acquaintance. He introduced him to a great number of men in the front ranks of public life. Then Mr. Chenery, of whom not five people in what was called society had ever heard, became a celebrity the moment he became Editor of *The Times*; invitations to great houses flowed in upon him; he had only to choose his associates. But again, a man who begins social life at fifty is not

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likely to get the most that can be got out of it. It is too late to acquire the flexibility essential to social success, or to master the thousand details, each of which is unimportant, and of all which together make the difference between a man who is and a man who is not of the world as well as could be expected. He could talk and talk well. When he was at his ease he was interesting, though always too didactic. But to say that he caught the tone of the people among whom he moved would be to say too much.

His mistakes in the office might be dealt with in a similar way, but need not be dwelt on. They were, in any case, never due to want of diligence or lack of capacity of mind. To recall one famous case—that morning in October, 1881, when *The Times* in its usual tone of omniscience announced that no decision of importance had been taken in the Cabinet Council of the day before, and when almost as men read the words at breakfast London was ringing with the arrest of Mr. Parnell. Mr. Delane might not have known (though he almost certainly would) that the Cabinet had resolved on that arrest, but he never would have committed the mistake of saying nothing had been done. He would have known whether he knew or not. Nor would Mr. Delane have allowed M. de Bismarck to edit his European politics for him in Paris, or to import his individual rancor against one eminent statesman after another into *The Times* columns. Nor, again, would he have thrown the reins on the neck of an unruly staff of leader-writers, or take their own line on questions on which they were bigoted. Nor, I repeat, would a timorous and narrow-minded proprietor have been allowed to mount the box, whether to use the drag or the lash, when the coach was on the edge of a precipice. For the many all but unaccountable errors which the world has noted in the conduct of the paper, Mr. Chenery is probably less responsible than Mr. Walter. To-day, at any rate, one prefers to remember the good and strong sides of his character and capacity, and to say that if he failed, or in so far as he failed, in one of the most difficult posts in the world, it was because he lacked the training essential to success.

G. W. S.

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TOTAL RECEIPTS OF PRODUCE. Per North River, Vessels and Railroads. NEW-YORK, MARCH 1, 1884.

Article	Receipts	Exports	Balance
Wheat	22,000 bushels	1,000 bushels	21,000 bushels
Barley	10,000 bushels	500 bushels	9,500 bushels
Oats	15,000 bushels	1,000 bushels	14,000 bushels
Rye	5,000 bushels	200 bushels	4,800 bushels
Indian	10,000 bushels	500 bushels	9,500 bushels
Flour	100,000 barrels	5,000 barrels	95,000 barrels
Meal	5,000 barrels	200 barrels	4,800 barrels
Grain	1,000 barrels	50 barrels	950 barrels
Hay	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Straw	5,000 tons	200 tons	4,800 tons
Wool	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Oil	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Butter	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Cheese	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Eggs	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Meat	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Fish	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Vegetables	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Fruit	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Grain	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
Hay	10,000 tons	500 tons	9,500 tons
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